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ABSTRACT

A statement incorporating the ideas of the District Counselors Committee and all counselors in the Junior College District of St. Louis as to the role of the counselor is provided. The statement is meant to help interpret the counselor's role and function and to provide a frame of reference for evaluating services, determining priorities, and allocating time and energy. (DB)

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THE ROLE OF THE COUNSELOR
AS DEVELOPED BY THE DISTRICT COUNSELORS COMMITTEE

JC 740 147

The Junior College District of St. Louis
St. Louis County

The formation of this statement has been a real "grass roots" project. Members of the District Counselors Committee, which serves as a coordirating body and clearing house for counselors, began the project by pooling ideas (as representatives of the three counseling staff). They then sent a first draft to all counselors for reactions, and incorporated their suggestions where they seemed to fit most appropriately. This process was repeated - several times. The statement attached includes the thinking of all of the counselors, to the best of the Committee's ability to put it into words.

The goal has been to compile a statement that can be used as follows:

1. To help interpret the counselor's role and function to working colleagues.
2. To provide a frame of reference for evaluating services, determining priorities and allocating time and energies.

The Junior College District of St. Louis-St. Louis County

THE ROLE OF THE COUNSELOR

The Junior College District of St. Louis - St. Louis County, as a public educational institution, acknowledges its responsibility to assist students in their development toward useful and productive citizenship in a democratic society. In this goal the JCD begins with a firm belief in the worth and dignity of each human being; it is committed to providing educational experiences which will help each student assess his abilities and interests, set his goals and move toward their attainment. The JCD recognizes that counseling is an integral part of these experiences.

Consistent with the American community college movement, the Junior College District makes possible an extension of educational opportunities to many more young people and adults than ever before. As a result of its extremely varied student population, the JCD has attempted to provide an equally varied range of appropriate educational programs, but it has also recognized a coordinate need -- a strong program of student services which assists students in making optimal use of college opportunities and integrating their educational experiences into their lives. From its inception the JCD has placed strong emphasis on counseling as the core of an effective student services program and has provided a staff of professionally trained counselors on each of its campuses.

The goal of counseling is to help each student understand and accept himself, become more aware of his alternatives, and learn effective decision-making skills, leading toward greater self-direction and assumption of responsibility. The counselor provides professional assistance to the student in coping with personal situations, improving relationships with others, focusing on vocational choices, and defining educational plans; in the process, the student explores who he is, what he values, and what he wants to become as a human being.

The counselor works also with his professional colleagues (administrators, teaching faculty and other student services personnel) in utilizing the college's resources to meet student needs more fully. By sharing his information about student characteristics, he contributes to a college environment that is consistent with the community college philosophy.

The responsibilities of the JCD counselor are determined by several factors. One of the most potent forces shaping his work is the academic calendar. Registration, mid-term grades, advisement and final examinations are times when students frequently seek assistance in exploration, interaction and decision-making. For example, the pressure of grades may contribute to a marriage crisis, the termination of a job, leaving the family home, or suicidal attempts. To meet the needs of students where they arise, counseling may take place in a private office, a classroom, the student center, the library steps, or an outreach center in the community. Thus, the counselor must have the flexibility to adjust his schedule and vary his location in response to the diversity of human needs and problems on the community college campus.

Other factors determining the responsibilities of each counselor are the overall needs of the College where he is employed and his own unique skills and training. The composite list of functions which follows will help to provide a perspective of the range of contributions which the Junior College District college counseling staffs can be expected to make.

COUNSELOR FUNCTIONS

I. COUNSELING:

A. provide individual counseling to assist each person in exploring self and life situations, for example, developing decision-making competencies, making educational choices and vocational and career decisions, etc.

B. administer tests and interpret the results.

II. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT INSTRUCTION:

A. teach experiential courses offered through the Personal Development division (93.xxx).

B. design and offer additional Personal Development courses to meet the current needs of the student body.

C. teach units in other college courses upon request.

D. offer group experiences when needed (e.g.) study skills, vocational exploration, communication skills, leadership training.

III. ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT:

A. assist students concerning their program of studies.

B. stay abreast of senior college requirements and to keep prospective transfer students informed.

C. inform students of registration procedures.

D. assist students with program adjustments.

IV. ENHANCEMENT OF THE COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT:

A. refer students to college staff members and services, and facilitate their interaction.

B. encourage and accept referrals from other college staff members.

C. consult with staff in regard to topics of common concern, such as classroom climate, student interaction, in-service training, etc., and promote institutional research in these and related areas.

D. serve as liaison to academic departments and divisions.

E. Utilize the resources of the college to help identify and attempt to meet the needs of student subgroups: non-whites, veterans, women, disabled, etc.

F. facilitate student involvement in college governance and student activities groups.

G. hold membership on College and JCD committees and in the Faculty Association.

V. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

A. develop liaison with high schools.

B. develop liaison with colleges, universities and other educational institutions.

C. develop liaison with community agencies.

D. refer students to off-campus resources.

E. accept appropriate referrals from off-campus.

F. provide services or speakers to community groups.

G. offer Community Service courses.

VI. PROFESSIONAL GROWTH:

A. conduct research to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of counseling services.

B. participate in national and local professional organizations.

C. attend workshops, seminars, conferences and conventions to improve competencies.

D. keep abreast of the literature and trends in counseling.

VII. STAFF DEVELOPMENT:

A. evaluate the organizational effectiveness of the counseling area.

B. improve staff relationships.

C. participate in staff meetings.

D. enhance the staff's knowledge of current developments through classes, workshops, and sharing of professional experiences.

E. supervise counselor interns, educational advisors, peer counselors, and student assistants.

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